

THE PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN TABORA REGION ON THE FELT EFFECT OF DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE ON CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the perceptions of secondary school communities in Tabora region on the felt effect of democratic leadership style on curriculum implementation. The school leadership style is an important component to explore since it determines whether or not the school will be successful in implementing the curriculum. The type of decision-making strategy selected for curriculum implementation is heavily influenced by a school leader's leadership style. The mixed methods and the sequential explanatory design were employed in which interviews and questionnaires were used to collect information from 149 participants. The findings revealed that democratic leadership style has a wide range of outcomes on curriculum implementation, including raising teacher and student motivation to participate in teaching and learning, creating a conducive environment for effective teaching, learning and assessment, promoting effective parental involvement in school affairs and encouraging student innovation and creativity.

Keywords: Democratic leadership style, curriculum implementation and decision making strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Schools should indeed exist in order to create a suitable environment for successful learning. The role of heads of schools is critical in this aspect since they are the key persons in terms of teaching and learning in schools. The head of school's leadership style has a considerable effect on curriculum decision-making strategies (Tarus, 2009; Suskavcevic & Blake, 2004; Bass & Bass, 2008). Even if an educational institution has significant resources for its improvement, Juhani (2009) finds that it may fail horribly if the leadership style does not create the best environment for encouraging various stakeholders to engage in the decision-making process. According to Mackenzi (2009), effective teaching and learning in the classroom cannot be realized without a good leadership style. While John (2015) claims that certain schools still lack the requisite performance requirements, not only due to a lack of funding or even poor infrastructure and teaching and learning facilities, but also due to a lack of effective leadership. Several Ministry of Education reports from several African countries have found that school leadership style has a direct effect on how curriculum implementation is carried out (UNESCO, 2012).

According to Lewin (1939), there are three distinct leadership styles: democratic or participative leadership, authoritarian or dictatorial leadership and laissez-faire or passive leadership. Democratic or participatory leadership is more consultative and participative in character. Because they had a strong belief in teamwork, leaders with this leadership style not only provide guidance to staff members, but they also regularly participate in group activities (Bass and Bass 2008). According to Woods (2004), democratic leadership enables team members to bring their individual perspectives to work on problem solving. Team members are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs when leaders practice a democratic leadership style. This is due to democratic leadership's ability to communicate and value everyone's thoughts and opinions. As a result, this leadership style necessitates team engagement in decision-making.

Autocratic leadership style which it is also referred to as authoritarian leadership style a leader has a tendency of control over all decisions and slightly consider the opinions of other stakeholders in an organization. Also autocratic leadership leaders give much emphasize on respect, trustworthiness, firm adherence to an organization rules and also they often make and impose strict rules. This leadership style is seeming to practice what has been believed by McGregors's Theory X that human being is naturally born with laziness tendencies therefore they must be guided by strictly rules at working place (Kopelman et al, 2008).

Another leadership style is laissez faire. In this style a leader offers little or no guidance at all to the staff members of an organization therefore, most of important decisions are handled by the group members without interference of principal leader. According Bass and Bass (2008), laissez faire leadership style can be effective in the organization whereby the stuff members are highly trained and had high experience in their areas of specialization. In schools a leader who practice this leadership style which is also championed by McGregor's Theory Y which contends that people are naturally motivated to like work thus, there is no need to force any one to work although a principal leader need to build collaborative environment and often assigning work to each employee (Okumbe & Kasonga, 2014, citing McGregor, 1964).

Because any leader strives to succeed in his or her leadership, leadership styles in modern times tend to change from time to time. Hettige (1996) discovered that school leaders who do not follow the democratic principles in their leadership are more likely to fail in implementing the school curriculum. Namirembe (2005) revealed that most middle schools in Naivasha lack the necessary tools for excellent academic achievement due to inadequate leadership styles that fail to engage parents, students and teachers in making important decisions about teaching and learning in schools.

In middle schools in Tennessee, Basely et al. (1913) found that a democratic leadership style in school created a better environment for participatory decision making than an authoritarian or laissez-faire leadership style. Furthermore, Nichols (1916) discovered that democratic leadership creates the best atmosphere for effective curriculum implementation in schools in Accra, Ghana. Also, Iqbal (2009) revealed that in public secondary schools, authoritarian leadership style had a significant negative effect on curriculum implementation when compared to democratic leadership style. On the other side, Yarmuhammadian and Rad (2006) suggest that democratic leadership styles are essential in schools to confront the difficulties of globalisation, in which education stakeholders want to be included in school decision-making. The curriculum implementation refers to how the pre-planned or formally intended course of study is translated into syllabi, schemes of work and lessons to be given to students by teachers with the help of other stakeholders such as parents and the school community at large

(Mezieobi, 1993). Successful putting the curriculum into action requires leadership that emphasizes teamwork, responsibility delegation and participatory decision-making. According to Offorma (2005), the leadership style used in schools has a significant impact on the success or failure of curriculum implementation. According to Winnefrida (2017), democratic leadership has beneficial benefits on how teaching and learning is performed in schools, but authoritarian leadership has significant negative effect on how teaching and learning is conducted in schools.

In general, from the surveyed literature, it has been found that, democratic leadership style among school leaders has tremendous positive impact on the way curriculum is implemented. Therefore, school leaders are urged to develop knowledge, skills and abilities which can help them to practice democratic leadership style for the benefit of the school in curriculum implementation. In Tanzania, little is known about the effect of democratic leadership style on the curriculum implementation in secondary schools. This paper therefore aims to fill the gap in the literature by addressing the following questions:

1. To what extent does democratic leadership affect teacher and student motivation?
2. How effective is democratic leadership in terms of teaching, learning and assessment?
3. Does democratic leadership encourage students to be more creative and innovative?
4. Does a democratic leadership style ensure that parents are actively involved in their children's education?
5. Is a democratic leadership style conducive to collaboration and cooperation among school stakeholders?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a pragmatism philosophical research approach to gather, analyse and interpret the study findings. According to Morgan (2007); Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) and Lopez and Molina (2011) the mixed-methods research methodology is utilized in pragmatic philosophy with the belief that using many forms of data collection processes leads to a better and more in-depth understanding of the subject being studied. The sequential explanatory research design was chosen for this study on the basis that it is an appropriate design that is consistent with the mixed method research strategy. The researcher obtains quantitative data in the first phase of data collection process, then collects qualitative data in the second phase. In accordance with the mixed method approach, this study included both quantitative and qualitative sampling methodologies. The sample size for this study was 149 respondents, including 36 school heads, 7 district educational officials (DEO), 55 teachers, 35 students, and 16 members of school boards. The study also employed stratified random procedures to select a sample population that best represents the overall population under investigation while ensuring that each subgroup of interest is represented. Purposive sampling procedures were also used to employee participants for the interviews in which 36 heads of secondary schools, 7 District Education Officers (DEO), 4 members of the student's counsel 36 academic deans, and 3 members of the school board from 36 secondary schools were among the respondents who were carefully selected for interview in this study. Purposive sampling approaches were used in this study to create a sample that could plausibly be assumed to reflect the population with sufficient knowledge about strategies for enhancing decision-making in secondary schools. Closed-ended questionnaires and semi structured interviews schedules were used to obtain data. For quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used and for qualitative data, thematic data analysis was used.

3. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Different issues emerged from the findings regarding the effect of democratic leadership style on the curriculum implementation in secondary schools in Tabora region. These issues are organized into five themes, namely: the role of democratic leadership on teacher's job satisfaction; the effect of democratic leadership in teaching and learning; the effect of democratic leadership on building students' creative and innovative mind; the effect of democratic leadership style on parent's engagement in children's education and the role of democratic leadership style on building collaboration and cooperation environment among school stakeholders.

3.1. The effect of democratic leadership on teacher and student motivation

This section attempted to find out how respondents felt about how democratic leadership affects teacher and student motivation. The responses of the respondents to the administered questionnaires were as follows:

Table 1. *The effect of democratic leadership on teacher and student motivation*

Opinions	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Disagree	10	6.7
Strongly disagree	28	18.7
Agree	21	14
Strongly agree	88	59
Undecided	2	1.3
Total	149	100

Source: Field data, 2021

According to Table 1, many respondents strongly agreed that democratic leadership increases teacher and student motivation. Along with these quantitative findings, the researcher intended to discover more about why democratic leadership was identified as a factor in increasing teacher and student motivation in teaching, learning and assessment.

According to one of the school heads, had this to say:

... democratic leadership, in my opinion, has a significant role to play in motivating teachers and students to participate effectively in classroom activities. Stakeholders in education are always free to express their views on what should be done with teaching and learning. (Interview with head of the school, 2021).

One parent, on the other hand, made the following insight about the role of democratic leadership on teacher and student motivation:

... There is no way to properly raise teacher and student morale unless democratic leadership has been used. When teachers and students in schools participate in decision-making, they become more motivated and become active participants in students learning. (Focus Group Discussion with parents, 2021).

With reference to the above mentioned narrative, it has been found that when democratic leadership is implemented in a school, teachers and students' motivation to participate in teaching and learning intensifies. Teachers and students who participate in school decision-making feel more motivated, therefore they participate more actively in teaching and learning activities. These findings are consistent with Marco et al. (2015), who discovered that teacher

and student involvement in decision-making is one of the most essential factors for raising teacher and student morale and actively engaging in classroom teaching and learning. Michael and Kennedy (2009), on the other hand, discovered that the success of a school's teaching and learning is determined by how democratic leadership is performed in schools. A school's possibility of success in curriculum implementation increases when teachers and students are actively involved in making decisions about teaching and learning. Additionally, Monica (2011) found that democratic leadership style in a school involves a variety of stakeholders in the decision-making process, resulting in the ideal atmosphere for strong academic achievement since each stakeholder is able to fulfil his or her duty satisfactorily. A democratic leadership style, according to Naicker and Mestry (2013), is more consultative in the sense that it fosters the optimal atmosphere for engaging multiple stakeholders in decision-making, resulting in good academic accomplishment among students.

3.2. The effect of democratic leadership in teaching, learning and assessment

This section presents and discusses the respondents' opinions on how democratic leadership affects school teaching, learning and assessment. The responses of the respondents to the surveyed administered questionnaires were as follows:

Table 2. *The effect of democratic leadership in teaching, learning and assessment*

Opinions	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Disagree	13	8.7
Strongly disagree	16	10.7
Agree	15	10.1
Strongly agree	95	63.7
Undecided	10	6.7
Total	149	100

Source: Field data, 2021

Based on the findings in Table 2, a big percentage of respondents believe that democratic leadership in schools has a significant effect on teaching, learning and assessment. Furthermore, during the interviews, the researcher asked open-ended questions to gather further information about how democratic leadership affects teaching, learning and assessment. During interview, one DEO had this to say:

... democratic leadership increases teachers' commitment to classroom teaching and learning, resulting in excellent student learning. Parents are also more involved in their children's education under democratic leadership because they have been given the opportunity to participate in decision making about teaching and learning in schools. (Interview with DEO, 2021).

On the same vein another respondent who was a teacher had this to say:

...various education stakeholders, such as parents and the school community in general, have excellent opportunities to participate in school issues with democratic leadership style. As a result of embracing the perspectives of various stakeholders, school leaders are able to make good decisions about the curriculum, resulting in effective teaching and learning in schools (Interview with the teacher, 2021).

In addition to that another respondent who was a parent also stress that:
... in this day of globalization, it is impossible for a school to achieve its goals without democratic leadership. This is because democratic leadership in schools allows school leaders to gather a variety of information from a variety of education stakeholders before making any decisions on teaching and learning. This practice adds value to the heads of school's decision-making process when it comes to curriculum implementation question (Interview with the teacher, 2021).

In light of what those three respondents above have mentioned, it has been noticed that democratic leadership has a tendency to include various stakeholders in school decision-making. This habit aids school leaders in acquiring a great deal of information about how effective teaching and learning can be implemented, resulting in effective teaching and learning in schools. These findings support Paul's (2016) conclusions that democratic leadership plays an important role in classroom teaching and learning since key stakeholders are heavily involved in decision-making. Furthermore, Johannes (2019) discovered that a school with democratic leadership has a better probability of receiving input from a variety of stakeholders on how to successfully conduct teaching and learning. Kyeyune (2008), on the other hand, suggests that democratic leadership style has a good impact on students' academic progress and overall school performance because it encourage teachers to collaborate with students and parents to achieve school goals. In line to that Sindieko et al. (2009) reported that, leadership style is the heart of any academic institution, therefore a leader should practice a leadership style that ensure that, every stakeholder of schools participate in planning for teaching and learning directly or indirectly for the benefit of the school in classroom teaching and learning. Vondey et al. (2010) on the other hand maintain that, effective curriculum implementation process needs a democratic leadership style because with this style a varieties of education stakeholders will be involved in planning for teaching and learning.

3.3. The effect of democratic leadership on building students with creative and innovative mind

This section presents and examines research findings on the effect of democratic leadership on the development of creative and innovative thinking in students. The respondents were asked to evaluate on the extent to which democratic leadership foster students with creative and innovative mind. The table below summarizes the opinions of the respondents.

Table 3. *The effect of democratic leadership on building students with creative and innovative mind*

Opinions	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Disagree	9	6
Strongly disagree	12	8.1
Agree	18	12.1
Strongly agree	99	66.4
Undecided	11	7.3
Total	149	100

Source: Field data, 2021

Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents strongly felt that democratic leadership rises students' ability to think creatively and innovatively. The study went even farther by

interviewing respondents to find out more information about how democratic leadership foster students' ability to think creatively and innovatively. The following are the testimonies of various interviewees. One parent had this to say:

... a democratically run school involves students in decision-making more frequently. As a result of this style, students address a variety of issues with teachers and parents about teaching and learning, resulting in the development of critical thinking skills among students. (Interview with the parent, 2021).

Moreover, another respondent who was a teacher seems to have the same idea with parents and had this to say:

... Thanks to democratic leadership, students have more opportunity to express their thoughts and even criticize some of the concepts and theories they are learning in class. Students had a lot of freedom to voice their opinions and even critique some of the activities that were going on inside and outside the classrooms as a result of this leadership style, leading in the development of creative minds among them. (Interview with the teacher, 2021).

According to these findings, the majority of education stakeholders agree that democratic leadership plays an important role in producing students with creative and innovative minds. These findings are consistent with George's (2008) findings that democratic leadership has a tendency of integrating students in decision-making targeted at improving teaching, learning and evaluation in schools. Additional, Marco (2016) claims that democratic leadership has a direct impact on student innovation and creativity because schools with this type of leadership create an environment in which students can be challenged and gain new perspectives on all of the subject matters they learn inside and outside of the classroom. In the same vein Okoth (2000) found out that, schools with a democratic tendency has great chances of creating an excellent environment for outstanding performance among students in major examinations. Furthermore, Orodho et al. (2013) revealed that, the over practising autocratic leadership in school is one among the major factors that hinder effective curriculum implementation because most of decision are made without the input of other school stakeholders. On the other side, Ashu (2014) suggest that, democratic leadership encourages students to develop creative and inventive thinking because they are free to express their opinions and to question some of the school's decisions. Leith wood et al. (2007) advocate that there are no way school leaders can develop students with critical thinking if they are not much engaged students in planning for teaching and learning. However, King (2002) suggest that, school leaders in this modern era need to change and adopt democratic leadership style as a means to ensure that students can develop creative mind about also things that they are learning at school.

3.4. The effect of democratic leadership style on parent engagement in children's education

This section summarizes and analyses study findings on the effect of democratic leadership on parental involvement in children's education. The respondents were asked to evaluate on how democratic leadership style affects parental involvement in their children's schooling. The responses of the respondents are summarized in the table below.

Table 4. 3.4. *The effect of democratic leadership style on parent engagement in children's education*

opinions	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Disagree	11	7.4
Strongly disagree	16	10.7
Agree	11	7.4
Strongly agree	101	67.8
Undecided	10	6.7
Total	149	100

Source: Field data, 2021

Table 4 showed that the majority of respondents strongly agree that democratic leadership style has great effect on parental involvement in their children's education. During interviews, the researcher asked the respondents to explain how democratic leadership in schools affects parental involvement in their children's education. The responses of two respondents are presented below. This is what one parent had to say:

... Leadership in the school that is democratic as a parent, I appreciate it since parents are actively involved in their children's education. Parents and students are heavily involved in the decision-making process when it comes to teaching and learning.... (Interview with the parent, 2021).

Another respondent who was a retired teacher had this to say:

... Schools with democratic leadership are more effective at implementing curriculum because parents have a larger part in their children's education. Parents are frequently involved in teaching and assessment planning. (Interview with the teacher, 2021).

According to the findings presented above, democratic leadership has a significant effect on parent engagement in children's education. In a democratic school, parents are frequently involved in important decisions about students' learning and assessment, resulting in effective curriculum implementation. Monica (2017) observed that democratic leadership creates a collaborative environment in which parents are directly involved in the school decision-making process. In addition, Wilhelm (2019) found that, in comparison to rural schools, most urban secondary schools in Kenya offered a suitable environment for parents to participate in decision-making. As a result, students from urban areas typically outperform those from rural areas in national based exams. On the other hand, Smith and Andrews (1989) found that schools that are less effective in teaching and learning in middle schools largely is associated with non-democratic leadership among school principals. With no-democratic leadership style parents are found to be slightly involved in major decision making pertaining teaching and learning. Alongside that, Wangui (2007) revealed that, autocratic leadership in most of public administered schools is one among the major factors that hinder effective parental engagement in children learning. The study found out that most of leaders who lead public secondary schools make decisions without considering inputs of parents hence ineffective parental engagement in children learning. Additionally, Nsubuga (2008) revealed that, the school leaders who are more often involve parents in making decisions on various school issues create the best environment for the school community to participate in school affairs. In addition, Andrew and James (2014) found out that, with democratic leadership style students'

academic performance is positively affected because stakeholders such as parents are highly engaged in supervising students learning at home. Leticia et al. (2009) discovered that democratic leadership in schools is tremendously beneficial to students since they are included in every significant decision made in school, and as a result, they feel motivated to learn more effectively.

3.5. The role of democratic leadership style on building collaboration and cooperation environment among school stakeholders

The role of democratic leadership on developing collaboration and cooperation among school stakeholders is examined and discussed in this section. The respondents were asked to evaluate on the extent to which democratic leadership style plays a significant influence in fostering collaboration and cooperation among school stakeholders. The results of the survey are shown in the table below.

Table 5. 3.5. *Democratic leadership style on building collaboration and cooperation environment among school stakeholders*

Opinions	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Disagree	2	1.3
Strongly disagree	4	2.7
Agree	7	4.7
Strongly agree	127	85
Undecided	9	6
Total	149	100

Source: Field data, 2021

According to the findings in Table 5, the majority of respondents believe that democratic leadership style has a significant role in fostering collaboration and cooperation among school stakeholders. The study, on the other hand, asked respondents to explain why democratic leadership in schools is vital for fostering collaboration and cooperation among school stakeholders during an interview. As one head of a school put it:

.....under democratic leadership, a school leader ensures that all members of the school community are involved in the decision-making process, even if involvement varies depending on the situation. Some stakeholders, such as students, may not be included in every decision, but their parents may be, and the leader may not always have the final say. A school leader may limit himself or herself to facilitating an agreement among the staff or the entire school community in some cases, or accept a choice that he or she does not agree with. (Interview with the head of school, 2021).

Another respondent who was a teacher had this to say:

..... The power of democratic school leadership in schools, in my opinion, is in its ability to create decisions and resolutions that are generally accepted and supported, given that all interests and questions are considered. Leaders seek to learn from a variety of groups within the school community in order to maximize their participation potential, which can be challenging but rewarding. Hence effective cooperation and

collaboration among educational stakeholders (Interview with the parent, 2021).

In addition, one district education officer added this comments:

..... Leadership and responsibility are shared in democratically led schools, and subgroup leaders are typically present. The more members of the school community, parents and external stakeholders, participate in decision-making, the clearer the image of varied interests, viewpoints and values will be. (Interview with the DEO, 2021).

Based on the above obtained testimonies from three respondents, it was discovered that democratic leadership in schools plays a significant role in fostering a collaborative and supportive climate among school stakeholders. This is due to the fact that democratically led schools are more likely to include students, parents and the school community in the decision-making process. These findings support Dorice's (2011) conclusions that democratic leadership in a school has a significant impact on the development and strengthening relationship among teachers, students and parents. A school leader can foster cooperation among education stakeholders by incorporating them in decision-making on a variety of issues that hinder curricular activities in the classroom. Furthermore, according to Robert (2017), democratic leadership is better to other leadership styles because school leaders who employ it are able to foster significant cooperation among school stakeholders. However, World Bank (2008) found out that, the leadership style that adheres democratic principles are highly succeeding in uniting education stakeholders compared to those school practice autocratic style of leadership. Thus, a democratic leadership ensures motivation to varieties of school stakeholders than any other styles of leadership in schools. Oyetunyi (2006) also found out that, democratic leadership style in school is highly collaborating teachers and parents hence effective supervision of students learning at school and home compound. Furthermore, Johnson et al. (2000) revealed that solidarity among parents and the school highly influenced by democratic leadership style. With democratic style school leaders makes decisions in a more collaborative way and creates a conducive environment for students and teachers to be committed in classroom practices. Nevertheless, Johnthan, (2010) revealed that democratic leadership boost school-community to engagement effectively in school affairs hence high student's academic achievement than other leadership styles. Leithwood (2005) also discovered that successful school leaders are those who are deeply committed to democratic leadership, despite the fact that sometimes they have become more flexible as a result of their exposure to different leadership styles. According to Macbeath et al. (2006), a leader who leads an educational organization should be democratic enough to fit into the school environment of today's democratic world, where the majority of education stakeholders desire to be a part of the school leadership.

4.CONCLUSION

In general, democratic leadership has been shown to have a positive effect on curriculum implementation, because democratic leadership encourages a school leader to adopt more collaborative decision-making procedures on many issues related to teaching, learning and assessment. Thus, it is high time for collective efforts to advocate for democratic leadership in schools, taking in mind the contingencies which may require the application of different leadership styles to specific situations.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made. Firstly, the heads of schools should be invigorated to opt and use democratic leadership practices as a means to improve the curriculum implementation process. Secondly, the ministry of education, science and technology of a country should ensure that aspiring and practicing heads of schools receive continuous training as a policy by design a special curriculum for leadership development for heads of schools to apply democratic leadership practices. Thirdly, heads of schools should encourage teachers, students and parents in person to engage in school decision making more often. And fourthly, heads of schools should develop positive attitudes about the teachers, students and parents' abilities on curriculum, instruction and decision making while they provide support.

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